

PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC HEALTH:

Highlights from the California Department of Public Health

JANUARY 2009





Director's Letter

Public health touches our lives in countless ways every day. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has made public health and emergency preparedness and response top priorities, which he demonstrated by establishing the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) as a new department dedicated to public health.

CDPH works to keep us all safe and healthy through the delivery of quality public health services throughout the State. In addition, we rely on public, private, and community-based partners at the local, state, national, and international levels to help us accomplish our mission. I acknowledge the invaluable contribution of all of our partners to the work we do every day.

The 80 programs administered by the CDPH touch the lives of Californians every day. CDPH provides food vouchers and nutrition education for women, infants, and children; monitors the safety of our food and water supplies; screens newborns for metabolic disorders; helps ensure

patients are receiving quality health care in hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes; encourages Californians to quit smoking; and produces the only antitoxin in the world to treat infant botulism, among many other critical public health programs.

CDPH could not administer these programs and services without the dedication and hard work of the operational support staff, functions and offices so vital to our successes. Without them, our advancements could not be achieved.

In July 2008, CDPH released its first strategic plan to establish a unified vision for the Department's future. The strategic plan, with five broadly defined goals, will prioritize and focus CDPH's efforts over the next two fiscal years.

I am proud of CDPH's activities and accomplishments. I invite you to use this report to learn more about CDPH and public health.

Sincerely,

Mark B Horton, MD, MSPH
Director



Introduction

"Public Health is the science and art of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention."

**American Association of Schools of Public Health*

Senate Bill 162 (Ortiz) established the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in 2007. CDPH employs approximately 3,500 people in over 60 locations around the State and administers a budget of over \$3 billion. Our mission is to optimize the health and well-being of the people in California.

CDPH achieves its mission through the following core activities:

- Promoting healthy lifestyles for individuals and families in their communities and workplaces.
- Preventing disease, disability, and premature death and reducing or eliminating health disparities.

- Protecting the public from unhealthy and unsafe environments.
- Providing or ensuring access to quality, population-based health services.
- Preparing for, and responding to, public health emergencies.
- Producing and disseminating data to inform and evaluate public health status, strategies, and programs.

CDPH is organized around five centers to emphasize distinct programmatic domains. The centers are: Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, Center for Environmental Health, Center for Family Health, Center for Health Care Quality and Center for Infectious Diseases. These centers:

- ensure quality leadership and management oversight of core public health domains;
- ensure high-level visibility of these important public health programmatic domains to key partners and stakeholders such as local health departments, health care providers, the federal government, the

Legislature, advocates, the press, and the public; and

- bring greater domain-specific expertise to the executive management team via the center deputy directors.

In addition to the five centers, two programs, Health Information and Strategic Planning and the Emergency Preparedness Office, coordinate activities that support all of the department's programs. Four policy coordination offices provide policy and program coordination on issues that affect multiple programs. Finally, none of our work would be successful without the assistance of our administrative and operational support programs.

This report describes the work of our centers and programs and showcases some of the department's many public health successes.



Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

The Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CCDPHP) integrates chronic, environmental, and occupational disease preventive practices and clinical medicine. CCDPHP works to control chronic disease and promote good health by promoting healthy social environments and communities through scientific health assessment, health education and outreach, policy development, professional training, and technical assistance.

Responsibilities

- Prevention and control of chronic disease, injury, and occupational and childhood lead poisoning
- Cancer surveillance, control, and research
- Surveillance and investigation of environmental exposure

- Public health education and training

Successes

- Reached an agreement with major motion picture studios to place California's anti-smoking ads on DVDs of all new movies with tobacco use that are rated G, PG and PG-13. California's award-winning ads are a proven anti-tobacco strategy.
- Over a five-year period, reduced by 23 percent the number of children newly identified as having elevated levels of lead, a substance known to cause lifelong learning and behavior problems and organ damage.
- Facilitated water fluoridation in the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, increasing the statewide percentage of residents with access to fluoridated water from 12 percent in 1995 to 60 percent in 2007
- Improved quality of clinical care and significantly reduced attacks for over 20,000 children with asthma in 25 underserved communities



Center for Environmental Health

The Center for Environmental Health (CEH) ensures the safety of drinking water, food, drugs, medical devices, and medical and industrial use of radioactive materials and X-ray machines. The Center's programs promote and maintain physical, chemical, and biological environments, preventing illness and protecting the public through management activities, including the evaluation and accreditation of testing laboratories. CEH uses its statutory authority to conduct enforcement, education, and licensing activities and provides technical assistance and laboratory capacity.

Responsibilities

- Food and drug safety
- Radiologic device tracking and certification
- Radiologic technologist and X-ray technician certification

- Food and drug laboratory
- Drinking water safety
- Medical waste management
- Recreational water and shellfish safety
- Environmental health specialist certification
- Sanitation and radiation laboratory

Successes

- Enhanced drinking water quality in California, including a drinking water standard for perchlorate
- Provided over \$1 billion in low-interest loans and grants to public water systems for water quality and infrastructure improvements
- Issued embargoes and restraining orders for adulterated, under-processed, or misbranded food, medical devices, and drug products valued at \$8 million



Center for Family Health

The Center for Family Health (CFH) works to improve health outcomes and reduce disparities in healthcare. CFH works closely with federal, state, community, and local health department partners to meet the diverse needs of underserved populations in California, including women of reproductive age; pregnant and breastfeeding women; and infants, children and adolescents and their families.

Responsibilities

- Domestic violence services
- Family planning services
- Teen pregnancy prevention
- Prenatal and newborn genetic screening
- Improve maternal, child and adolescent health
- Supplemental nutrition assistance and education for women, infants & children (WIC)

Successes

- Served 1.43 million WIC participants, providing nearly 1 billion in food checks promoting healthy food choices; nutrition education, breastfeeding support, health and social services
- Launched the Preconception Health and Health Care initiative dedicated to promoting optimal health before pregnancy
- Expanded Newborn Screening to include cystic fibrosis and biotinidase deficiency testing and added a fourth blood marker, Inhibin, to Prenatal Screening, significantly improving the detection rate
- Conducted statewide Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes in California
- Saved \$1.4 billion in public costs through prevention of unintended pregnancies, via Family PACT services
- Contributed to California's teen birth rate decline of 2% in 2007 through teen pregnancy prevention programs



Center for Health Care Quality

The Center for Health Care Quality (CHCQ) regulates health facilities, health professionals, and laboratories to secure safe, effective, and quality health care for all Californians. CHCQ licenses and certifies health facilities, agencies, and professionals, evaluating compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. CHCQ also investigates complaints and oversees the education, training, and criminal record clearance of nursing home administrators, certified nurse assistants, home health aides, and hemodialysis technicians. CHCQ ensures quality standards in clinical and public health laboratories, blood banks, and tissue banks and licenses laboratory personnel, including laboratory scientists, phlebotomists, genetic scientists, and clinical chemists.

Responsibilities

- State licensing and federal certification of 30 different types of facilities and agencies that provide health care

- Nursing home administrator licensing
- Nurse assistants, home health aide, and hemodialysis technician certification
- Clinical laboratory and personnel licensing
- Facility surveys, certification reviews, and complaint investigations

Successes

- Trained and deployed more than 200 new surveyors since 2006 to assess facilities for participation in Medicare and Medicaid
- Launched the Health Facilities Consumer Information System website, providing consumers with profiles and performance information on California's long-term care facilities and hospitals
- Initiated investigation of over 99 percent of all complaints against long-term care facilities within the statutorily required 10 working days for general complaints and 24 hours for complaints alleging immediate patient jeopardy



Center for Infectious Diseases

The Center for Infectious Diseases (CID) protects Californians from infectious diseases by providing leadership and resources to local health departments. CID encourages and promotes immunization; investigates, controls, and prevents outbreaks of communicable diseases; and works to prevent and reduce complications from sexually transmitted diseases. CID programs coordinate state education, prevention, and treatment services related to HIV/AIDS and strengthen the ability of state and local health agencies to detect and control illnesses resulting from bioterrorism.

Responsibilities

- Infectious disease prevention, surveillance, treatment and control
- HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support services
- Epidemiology

- Diagnostic and reference laboratory testing
- Immunizations
- Sexually transmitted disease prevention, surveillance and control
- Tuberculosis, surveillance and control

Successes

- Implemented the AIDS Regional Information and Evaluation System (ARIES), enabling providers to better coordinate care through access to shared client information
- Distributed nine million vaccine doses through Vaccines for Children Program.
- Initiated a pilot project to provide hepatitis A and B vaccines to facilities serving high-risk adults
- Added severe cases of Staphylococcus aureus infection, including methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), to the list of diseases reported by health care providers to local health departments
- Provided Baby Botulism Immune Globulin (BabyBIG®) antitoxin to treat 100 infant botulism patients nationwide, avoiding \$10 million in hospital costs



Emergency Preparedness Office

The Emergency Preparedness Office (EPO) coordinates California's public health emergency preparedness and response efforts. EPO coordinates with local health departments, hospitals and other health care providers, the federal government, and national organizations such as the American Red Cross. EPO also distributes and oversees federal grants to improve local public health and health care facility emergency preparedness and response.

Responsibilities

- State and local public health emergency preparedness, response, and recovery
- Disaster planning and surge capacity development for health care systems
- Pandemic influenza planning
- Strategic National Stockpile

Successes

- Developed Standards and Guidelines for Healthcare Delivery During Surge Events, the nation's first comprehensive guide for hospitals, health care facilities, and local health departments on responding to a sudden, increased demand for services
- Coordinated safe evacuation of 1,600 patients from 26 threatened health care facilities during the 2007 Southern California wild fires
- Addressed public health hazards from smoke and ash
- Designed and sponsored Cross Sector Summit and Special Populations Forums to improve pandemic influenza planning
- Created the "Be Prepared California" website to help Californians understand and prepare for catastrophic threats to public health



Health Information and Strategic Planning

Health Information and Strategic Planning (HISP) supports CDPH programs through a variety of activities. HISP takes the lead in making CDPH health data systems more integrated, accessible, and useful for policy development and program management; provides technical assistance and support to local health agencies; organizes strategic planning and special initiatives; and builds strong relationships with public health organizations and schools of public health.

Responsibilities

- Vital records (births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages)
- Collection, validation, analysis, and dissemination of health statistics
- Local public health services (indigent care, environmental health)

- Refugee health, including culture- and language-appropriate assessment, outreach and referral
- Medical Marijuana Program
- Web-based services
- Geospatial Information Systems services
- Strategic planning and performance measurement

Successes

- Implemented the Electronic Death Registration System in 51 of 61 local registration districts, increasing the number of electronically created death certificates in California to over 98 percent
- Supported 40 counties in implementing the Medical Marijuana Program
- Led CDPH's first strategic planning effort
- Completed reengineering of the Center Request Tracking System to improve support of business functions

California Office of Binational Border Health

The California Office of Binational Border Health focuses on emerging public health issues, informs and educates public health professionals, and assesses the health status of the border region.

Coordinating Office for Obesity Prevention

The Coordinating Office for Obesity Prevention (CO-OP) develops and implements strategic policy and planning to address the obesity epidemic in California. CO-OP promotes cooperation among government, business, philanthropic, and other organizations to redefine social norms regarding healthy eating and active lifestyles. CO-OP is committed to changing social and physical environments to promote healthy choices and reduce obesity.

Office of Multicultural Health

The Office of Multicultural Health (OMH) provides policy and strategic planning advice on multicultural and racial health issues to both CDPH and the Department of Health Care Services. OMH is the focal point within CDPH for improving access to quality health care and eliminating health care disparities among California's diverse racial and ethnic communities. In addition, OMH works to improve collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on the health of racial and ethnic populations.

Office of the State Public Health Laboratory Director

The Office of the State Public Health Laboratory Director provides support services, consultation, and regulatory compliance oversight to all six CDPH laboratories. In addition, the State Public Health Laboratory Director provides executive-level policy direction and coordination across laboratory programs.

Office of Women's Health

The Office of Women's Health (OWH) works to improve the health status of women and girls in California. OWH provides policy guidance and conducts research specific to women's health. The office serves both CDPH and the Department of Health Care Services by monitoring women's public health programs, recommending policy and program enhancements, and promoting awareness of women's health issues.

Advisory Bodies

Two statutorily created entities advise CDPH and its Director on a broad range of public health issues, the California Conference of Local Health Officers and the Public Health Advisory Committee.





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